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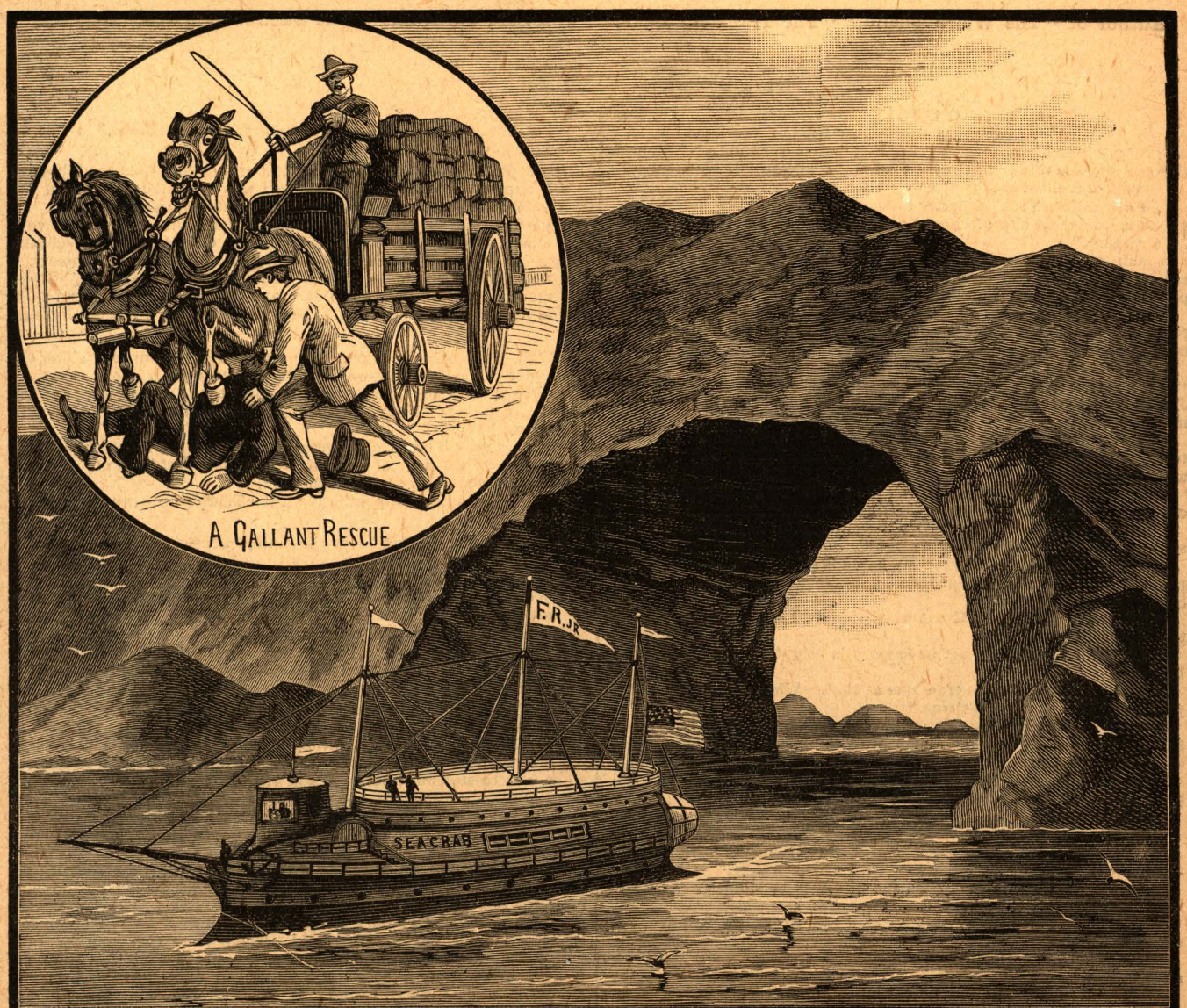
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The Unknown Sea:

or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Under-Water Cruise.

By "NONAME."



The Sea Crab sailed leisurely through the cavern entrance and in a few moments emerged into the inland sea. It presented the appearance exactly as described by Captain Brant. The shores extended north and south far out of sight. Seth Small was delighted.

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THE UNKNOWN SEA;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Under-water Cruise.

A STORY OF SUBMARINE SEARCH.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "The Weird Island," "The Transient Lake," "The Lost Caravan," "The Sunken Isthmus," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN BRANT'S STORY.

SIMPLE things often lead to great results. A thrilling evolution of circumstances is often bred by the slightest and seemingly most unimportant of incidents.

One day a New York reporter happened to be passing along West street, in the great city of New York. He was looking for material for a "story."

A man, crossing the street before him, slipped under the wheels of a dray. The scribe made a leap forward, and, just in the nick of time, pulled him out from his perilous position.

The victim of the narrowly averted accident turned and gripped the reporter's hand. He was a strong framed, bearded man, with a ruddy complexion and frank blue eyes.

"Hang me up, mate!" he cried in a hearty, quarter deck voice, "you pulled me out of a bad fix! A sailor never forgets a favor, and Jim Brant, captain of the Mazy ain't goin' to be the exception. Come in and drink."

Now the newspaper man chanced to have a dry throat. He hesitated but a moment, and then allowed Captain Brant to pull him into a near by hotel.

They drank brandy and soda, and the scribe modestly received the captain's profuse expressions of gratitude.

"Now what sort of a keel do ye travel on, mate?" finally cried the skipper. "Ye don't look like a sailor."

"No," replied the reporter; "my name is Seth Small, and I am reporter for the New York Universe. I am looking for a story for the Sunday edition——"

"A yarn, is it, mate? Great whirlwinds! I can help ye out on that!"

"You can?" asked the scribe eagerly, a bright thought coming to him.

"You bet I can, and a true one at that. When Jim Brant tells a yarn ye kin put it down fer true."

The reporter flashed out his note-book at once. Perhaps this old sea-dog could really tell him some wonderful sea tale which would read well in the Sunday edition. So he said:

"Sit down here at the table, captain, and let's have the yarn. I'll put it into print if it's a good one."

"All right, mate!"

Then the captain began.

"It's about an unknown sea," he said, "an' I don't believe the keel of any other ship but mine has ever cut its blue waters."

"An unknown sea!" exclaimed the scribe, incredulously. "All the water on the globe has been located."

"Don't ye believe it! There's water, I can swear, no man ever yet explored except myself."

Small looked attentively at the captain for some moments. He saw at once that he was in earnest.

Naturally the reporter was interested as well as surprised. A thousand possibilities suggested themselves to him.

So he said:

"I would be pleased to hear your story, Captain Brant."

"All right, mate."

The captain took another sniff of the brandy and soda, and began:

"It happened four years ago, when I was first made captain of the Mazy. We sailed for the Aleutians after seals and whale oil.

"We were six weeks in the Behring Sea, and had made a fair voyage, when our captain concluded to stand off for the Kamtschatka coast. So we sailed for Cape Navarin, south of the Gulf of Anadir.

"You must know, mate, that is a rough part of the world. There are hundreds of miles of the wildest uninhabited coast you can find, and to be cast away there would be starvation, for it is fearfully barren.

"Well, we weathered Navarin, and were making our way along the coast, not two miles off shore, when our mate spied a queer object.

"'Cap'n,' says he, 'squint your eye over to the shore there, and tell me what you think of that. Is it a big hole in the cliff, or some kind of a natural mirror?'

"Wall, I took a glass and squinted hard at what looked like a big, arched hole in the wall of the cliff, with a little reef in front. I could see sky and water beyond, sure enough.

"'How does this happen?' says I. 'There's no strait here that I know of.'

"'Reckon not, cap'en,' says the mate, 'according to the chart.'

"'To make sure, let's look,' says I.

"And we did.

"We went over the chart, and there was not the slightest mention of any such thing as a strait or an inland sea. I hallooed to the wheelman to bear off a point for the shore.

"Soundings showed deep water, and we kept creeping nearer until we entered a strait between the reef and the cliff, and here we had a full view of a curious sight.

"Certainly there was before us a high arch in the cliff fully two hundred feet high and six hundred feet broad.

"We actually sailed right through this cavern like arch and came out into the unknown sea. The shore line north and south ran out of sight, and to westward no land was visible.

"Here was a discovery. At first we thought it might be a part of the Okhotsk Sea, but we were too mightily far north for that. It was northing more nor less than a great inland sea, for aught we knew, bigger than the Black or Caspian Seas.

"The Mazy took the wind and we stood out to the westward to see if a coast did not show up soon, so that we might get an idea of how large the body of water might be.

"And in an hour we did sight land. But as we drew nearer we saw that it was a curious shaped island. There were two long points of land jutting out from a big high cliff or head of rock. The outline of this isle was exactly like that of a bull, head, ears, horns and all.

"So we named it Bull Island. It was covered with quite a lot of vegetation, and looked quite attractive. We sailed around it, and one

of the crew suddenly spied an object which gave us all a new interest in the place.

"It was what looked like a Martello tower, rising right up from the trees on the top of the Bull's Head. It would seem to indicate that the isle was inhabited.

"No human being had as yet been seen, but this made no difference. All of our crew wanted to explore the place, so I ordered out two boats.

"We had arms aboard, so we felt no fear as we set foot on the island shore. But as we landed we saw a great heap of hewn rocks extending into the surf. This had no doubt once been a quay.

"That it was in ruins gave me an idea. Perhaps the isle was uninhabited at the present time. In that case we had nothing to fear and only some old ruins to explore.

"But this did not in the least abate our interest. We pushed ahead on the exploration.

"We climbed the Bull's Head and got a complete view of the entire island. In its center was a deep, bowl-shaped cavity, which was cut, probably by Nature out of the solid rock. There were steps leading down to a pool of water in its center.

"We climbed down and looked into the pool. Jim Swayne, the bo'sun, let down a line and plummet. But no bottom could be found. This scared the rest and all crawled out of the place as quickly as they could. It was named the 'Devil's Basin.'

"We found plenty of evidence that the island had been inhabited, but none of the people could be found. Judging from the Martello tower and other ruins, the original settlers were Norsemen, though how they had ever traveled all the way from Norway to settle in Kamtschatka was a problem.

"One of our men suggested a quest for buried treasure. But it began to grow dark and then a curious thing happened. We were all at the Martello tower when the island began to tremble, and a terrific roaring like a dozen lions filled the air.

"Where it came from, or what was the cause of it, we did not wait to see. The men were sure that the devil was come after them, and I believed that it was an earthquake and the isle might sink.

"Back we went to the boats and to the ship. When we got on board every man was pale as a corpse. The roaring noise on the island lasted over an hour. Then it ceased.

"The isle did not sink nor the devil did not appear. But it couldn't keep the men there longer. They would have mutinied. We eased off from the isle and stood to the westward.

"We sighted two other islands and then the crew were so infernal superstitious that we were obliged to abandon the quest and go back to the Gulf of Anadir. Two days later we were in the Kamtschatka Sea.

"We struck out to the Kurile Islands and Japan. Then we used the Formosa Channel to reach the China Sea, and finally six months later entered the Gulf of Aden, and thence to the Mediterranean and home. That's the whole story, skipper, and if you want my 'davy on it, I'll give it iron-clad."

"I have it all down here in short hand, Captain Brant," replied the reporter, "it will make a capital story and thanks to you. I have never been more interested in my life."

"I'm glad to hear that, mate. And now I'm due after this hour aboard the Mazy. She lies at Pier 8. Come down and see me before the twentieth, for we sail then."

"I will be glad to do so!" replied the reporter, as he closed his note book.

They gripped hands and separated.

The captain went back to the Mazy. The reporter returned to his desk.

The result was an exciting chronicle in the Sunday edition. The story was read by thousands with the deepest of interest.

But perhaps the most interested reader of it was a brilliant young man whose name and fame is world wide. This was Frank Reade, Jr., of Readestown, the inventor of the air-ship, the electric horses, the submarine boat and many other wonderful things. There was a good reason why he was interested.

CHAPTER II.

THE REPORTER AND THE INVENTOR.

AND that reason we will proceed to give without further delay.*

Readestown was somewhat excited over a report that Frank Reade, Jr. had just finished his submarine boat, and that it was the peer of all his inventions.

The Sea Crab, as it was called, was a marvelous feat of skill. Nobody was prouder or happier than Frank Reade, Jr. himself, of this fact.

The submarine boat was all equipped for a cruise, and Frank had sailed from Readestown with her for New York.

Anchored off Fort Hamilton, he had gotten hold of a Sunday newspaper, and as fate had it, it was the very paper containing Seth Small's wonderful story of the "Unknown Sea."

At once Frank was interested.

"If that story is true," he declared, "then that settles a vexed question for me. There is a good project."

He saw that the story was vouched for by the captain of the Mazy very emphatically. There was scant reason for doubting it.

He went on deck. By the rail stood two men. One was a negro, and the other a comical little Irishman.

These two men were the crew of the Sea Crab, and Frank Reade, Jr.'s old and tried servitors. They accompanied him upon all his trips.

"Barney and Pomp," said the young inventor, "get ready for going ashore; I have an errand in the city."

"All roight, sor," cried the Irishman, turning a handspring.

"We will, sah," replied Pomp, cutting a pigeon wing.

In a few moments the Sea Crab's boat was out. Frank decided to row ashore alone after all, so Barney and Pomp were commissioned to keep guard over the Crab until his return.

"Dat am somefin' berry funny," declared Pomp, shaking his head. "Neber see Marse Frank do anyfing ob dat kind afore! He am up to somefing, yo' kin jes' bet!"

"Begorra, an' ain't that jest phwat we want?" cried Barney. "Shure, I'm achin' for a thrip to some other worruld, av Misther Frank says the word."

"Oh, I ain' kicking 'tall," declared the darky. "Nuffin' suits me no bettah den trabblin', an' I jes' don' keer whar it am."

So positive were the two that something unusual was in the wind, that they eagerly awaited Frank's return from the city.

Arrived at the pier in New York, Frank went ashore and proceeded directly to the office of the Universe. He called for Seth Small.

Now Small, being an assistant editor as well, had a private office. Into this Frank was shown.

As he tendered his card, Small gave a great start.

"Mr. Reade!" he exclaimed, "this is an honor, sir. Pray have a chair."

"Thank you!" replied Frank, and at once proceeded to state the object of his visit.

This was to inquire into the veracity of the report as to Captain Brant and his wonderful story. Seth Small's eyes glistened.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "I see your purpose, Mr. Reade, and what a project it would be for you to visit this famous unknown sea in your submarine boat."

"If there is such a place," suggested Frank, dryly.

"I have no reason to doubt Captain Brant's story."

"Then you really believe it true?"

"Most assuredly. If you desire, we will go down and interview the captain now."

"It is not necessary," said Frank, quickly; "I am satisfied. I shall sail for the North Pacific to-morrow."

Small was excited.

He arose and placed a hand on Frank's arm. His eyes shone like stars as he said:

"Will you really do that, Mr. Reade?"

"Yes!"

"I beg your pardon—but—will you take a passenger?"

Frank looked keenly at Small.

It was a moment of suspense.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Myself!"

Frank was silent for a full minute. Then he returned the reporter's eager gaze, and said:

"Do you mean that?"

"I do."

"We may never come back."

"That is a risk I am willing to take."

"There may be hardships."

"I welcome them."

"Come on board the Crab and we will talk it over," said Frank, brusquely.

The reporter picked up his hat and together they left the office. In a short while they were in the small boat rowing out to the submarine craft.

When Barney and Pomp saw Frank coming with a visitor, they were more sure than ever that something was in the wind.

Barney lowered the gangway and they came aboard.

The reporter looked about him with deepest interest. The Crab, such as he could see of it, was a curious craft.

At a distance one might have taken it for a species of torpedo boat. The hull was long and rakish, and set low in the water. It was of steel and symetrical in all its proportions.

Above the deck there arose a long cylindrical structure in which were heavy plate glass windows. A small deck, protected by guard rails, was above this. Just forward was the pilot-house, a small tower built in the bow.

All this Seth Small saw in the one sweeping glance which he gave about him.

Then Frank took him in tow.

The young inventor led him along the narrow platform on each side and showed him the exterior points of the craft. Then he said:

"Now let us go inside."

A small door, with a railed platform before it, opened into the cabin of the Sea Crab. Through this they now passed.

Into a vestibule they first came, with hermetical glass doors. Then they entered the cabin.

This was indeed richly furnished and equipped. The reporter could picture the novelty of sitting at the plate glass windows and studying the deep sea, when the boat was submerged.

There were various compartments to inspect, the cook room or galley, the staterooms, the engine room, the pilot-house and the great tank room.

"No doubt the working of this craft is a problem to you," said Frank, explanatively. "I will therefore illustrate to you how the boat is made to rise or sink at one's will."

He turned and spoke to Barney and Pomp. They entered the cabin

from the deck, and then Frank pressed a spring upon the electric keyboard.

"That will shut all the doors and windows, and seal them hermetically," he said.

Then he pressed another valve. There was a swift, rushing sound of waters, and the next moment daylight and sky vanished, and all was momentary darkness.

"That has opened a big tank in the lower hull," said Frank; "it instantly fills with water and causes the boat to sink. Now, let us have some light on the subject."

He pressed another button.

In an instant the cabin was brilliantly illuminated with scores of electric lights. There was a slight shock, and Frank rejoined:

"We are on the bottom. Look out of the window."

Seth did so, and saw the sandy bottom of the bay dimly through the water. There were darting fish of all sizes, heaps of kelp and shell fish.

"Wonderful!" he ejaculated, "by Jove, Frank, this beats all I ever heard of. I wish I had my camera here. It would be worth four columns in the Universe."

The young inventor laughed.

"There is on the deck of the pilot house a search light," he said, "it will show you objects two miles away on the surface, and two hundred yards under water."

With this he pressed a spring and instantly a pathway of brilliant light shot far out into the dense waters.

Small noted all these wonderful things with the deepest interest.

"You say that we are enabled to sink by flooding a tank in the hold of the vessel?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"How then are we able to rise?"

"The tank is so arranged that by pneumatic valves it can be exhausted of the water again in a few seconds. As it is drained, so the boat rises."

"Good!" exclaimed the reporter. "I can understand that. But one other thing, what prevents our stifling down here? How do we get air?"

"Come this way."

Frank led the way into the electric engine rooms. He placed his hand upon a huge silver bell-shaped tank, and said:

"This furnishes air for the entire boat, and can furnish it for an indefinite period."

The reporter stared at the curious object.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A chemical generator," replied Frank. "In that vessel which is supplied with many valves connecting with pipes extending all over the vessel, there are chemicals which manufacture an inexhaustible supply of pure oxygen. There is never any danger of getting short of pure air."

"But the foul air——"

"It is consumed by other chemicals placed in various parts of the boat as soon as made."

"This is all very wonderful," again declared the reporter. "You are a genius, sir—a born genius."

"Not quite as bad as that," protested Frank, with a laugh.

This in the main concluded the examination of the submarine boat. The reporter was satisfied.

Other features concerning the mechanism and make-up of the wonderful craft we will dilate upon in the course of the story, and now with the reader's kind permission pass on to thrilling incidents.

Frank pressed the valve and the Sea Crab rose to the surface.

The anchor was again called into requisition. Then Seth Small held a brief conference with Frank in the pilot house.

The result was that Seth presently emerged and entered the boat to return to New York. He was in high spirits, and as he went over the rail, said:

"I will be on hand to-morrow, Frank. Until then, au revoir!"

CHAPTER III.

UNDER WAY.

It was but human nature, as well as reportorial instinct, for Seth Small to write up a glowing account of the submarine boat and her inventor, and the romantic project.

He took care to intimate that through special enterprise the Universe would send a special correspondent aboard the Sea Crab to the Unknown Sea.

This delightful tale came out in the four o'clock edition, thanks to modern newspaper resources.

The effect was electrical.

Barney and Pomp were trimming up the deck, preparatory to starting upon a great cruise the next day, when a startling thing occurred.

Down the harbor came fully a dozen strong tugs.

They were driving at full speed, and seemingly racing with each other.

Indeed, so madly were they driving straight toward the little submarine boat that Barney, in alarm, called Frank from the cabin.

"Be me sowl I belave they mane to run into us," he cried. "See phwat yez think av it, Misther Frank."

"It must be that they can see us!" cried Frank, in surprise; "yet, there may be a mistake."

He rushed forward and ran up a signal flag. But the tugs did not abate speed and bore down directly upon the Sea Crab.

When a hundred yards away, however, they split up and checked speed. In the bow of each stood an excited man.

Each waved his arms excitedly, and hailed the Sea Crab. Such a chorus of shouts and yells were enough to split one's ear-drums.

And the tugs kept pressing nearer until they literally beset the Crab, and there was great danger of a collision.

Then Frank realized the character of the melange. Those were all representatives of different newspapers and each was trying to get his oar in first. Frank was disgusted with the tumult and finally managed to gain silence for a brief moment.

"What the deuce do you fellows want?" he cried.

"The Newsgatherer claims the prior right to send a representative with you to the Unknown Sea!" cried one of the newspaper men.

"Never!" cried another; "the World's Item will pay you five thousand dollars for the privilege!"

"The Unit will give ten thousand!" cried another, vociferously.

"My paper will raise it five thousand!"

"Twenty thousand!"

Then all began shouting and yelling vociferously, until Frank was nigh crazy and angry as well.

"Go on back to the city, all of you," he cried. "I will take none of you on any terms. Only one man will go with me, and that is Seth Small."

"That is discrimination," shouted one man; "the public demand better treatment. The Universe reaches but a few compared with my paper."

At this a fearful tumult rose again. Frank stood it as long as he could.

There was imminent danger of collision with some of the drifting tugs, so he finally adopted an effective measure for safety and to get rid of the nuisance.

He called Barney and Pomp into the cabin and closed the doors hermetically. Then he sent the Sea Crab to the bottom of the bay.

He was beyond the reach of his tormentors there, though the persistent scribe of the "Newsgatherer" kept his tug on the spot all night, and was vainly endeavoring to get an audiance with Frank, when Seth Small came on board the next day.

"Well," laughed the Universe reporter, "that is Hustler Jenks, and he is a sticker. No use, Jenks! Go back and tackle something easier!"

"This is hardly fraternal treatment, Small," cried the persistent Jenks. "You ought to divide a good thing."

"It is not in my power, Jenks," replied Seth, "but if you will be here when I return some months hence, I'll give you first look at my notes. That is the best I can do!"

Then Frank started the engines of the Sea Crab and she glided away.

The great voyage was begun.

The Crab could sail under water, but as more rapid speed could be made on the surface, it was decided to proceed in that way.

As soon as they were well out to sea, Frank headed the Crab northward.

Small was surprised.

"How is this?" he asked. "Ought not our course to be south by east?"

"Why?" asked Frank.

"As near as I can make it, the nearest route to Kamtschatka is around Cape Horn and up the Pacific."

"To cross the equator twice," said Frank, "and then cover the entire length of the globe? What is the use of that, when we can sail thither in one fourth the distance?"

Small looked astounded.

"How do you make that out?" he asked.

"Come into the cabin."

On the table lay some charts. Frank placed a finger on one and traced the course.

"Due north," he said, "into Davis Strait and Baffin's Bay."

"What, into the Arctic?"

"Yes."

"For Kamtschatka?"

"Why not?"

"But—the ice——"

"You forget," said Frank with a smile, "this is a submarine boat. We can easily sail beneath any ice field and cut off three-fourths of the distance. We shall emerge in due time in the Behring Straits."

Small drew a deep breath.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I never thought of that! And the voyage under Arctic ice will only intensify the interest of the trip."

"Of course."

Small had no more to say.

He went out on deck and paced up and down in high spirits. They passed a United States cruiser and saluted it.

It seemed to Small as if he had entered upon the most remarkable enterprise ever attempted by man.

To think of a deep sea cruise under the frozen Arctic was enough, let alone exploring the Unknown Sea. The future held great possibilities.

Soon a lively gale was giving the little craft some motion. But she proved stanch, riding the waves like a cork while it lasted.

Barney and Pomp were happy.

While they were the warmest of friends nothing suited them better than a rough and tumble, or a bit of friendly nagging. If one could succeed in playing a practical joke upon the other he was happy.

So it happened that the voyage was not many days old when the Celt got an opportunity to "roast" his confrere.

Pomp had just disposed of the noonday meal and as the sea was calm and the day powerful hot, he had brought a hammock on deck, and stretched it under an awning in the extreme bow.

Here he could catch what little air was going and enjoy a refreshing nap.

Barney in the pilot-house could easily look down upon the enterprise, and as an idea came into his head he smiled a broad smile.

Pomp fastened one end of the hammock to the guard rope from the bowsprit, and the other to the lee rail. Then he tumbled in and fell asleep.

Frank and Small were below engaged in studying charts. There could be no better opportunity.

Half an hour passed.

Then Barney lashed the wheel and stole out on deck. He stood over the hammock and looked into Pomp's unconscious face.

"Shure he luks loike a cherub," he chuckled, "but he'll not look so peaceful when he awakes."

Now Pomp was a sound sleeper.

Barney knew this else he would not have undertaken the trick which he did. He felt perfectly safe.

The Celt unknotted the end of the hammock rope from the rail. He swung it around slowly and carefully, and then began to crawl out upon the bowsprit.

The next moment Pomp was swinging over the water, and Barney had fastened the other end of the hammock rope to the end of the bowsprit.

Then he crept back on deck and chuckling, returned to the pilot house.

"Begorra, he'll be a surproised nigger whin he wakes up," muttered the Celt. "An' it'll be some climbing he'll have to do to get back."

Barney's practical joke worked far better and much different than what he had anticipated.

The hammock swung gently back and forth under the bowsprit. For a time there was just lullaby enough in the motion to keep the darky asleep.

But suddenly matters took a turn. The wind veered a little and began to kick up a nasty swell.

The bow of the Sea Crab began to rise and fall, and suddenly the knot in the hammock rope slipped a trifle.

This lowered it until it nearly touched the water. Barney saw this turn with glee.

"Be jabers, there'll be fun roight away," he muttered. Then he changed the course of the boat just a bit, so that it would pitch a trifle more. This had the desired result.

Down went the hammock until it lightly touched the water. Up it went again, and then once more down.

Each time it dipped lower, and water was beginning to soak the canvas. At last it took a plunge and the water came over the verge and deluged the sleeping darky.

This was enough.

Sputtering and gasping, Pomp rose in the hammock. He stared wildly about him, but nobody was in sight.

"Fo' de lan's sakes," he muttered; "howebber did I git out yere? Dis am a berry funny ting!"

Barney, in the pilot house, was of course convulsed.

The darky stood up in the hammock to escape another ducking, and nearly fell out. Then he began to clamber hastily up into the bowsprit.

This was no light feat, but he finally managed it.

Clambering onto the deck, he stood there dripping and astonished.

He rubbed his eyes in utter mystification.

"Dat am a berry funny ting," he muttered. "How in de debbil did I eber hang dat hammock out dere? I take mah oaf I tied it up to dis yere rail! I wondah if I hab been somnambulatin'?'

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGE SCHOONER.

POMP was certainly mystified. He studied the matter for some time. Then slowly an idea began to dawn upon him.

"Fo' de lan's sakes!" he muttered. "I wondah if dat am a trick ob dat I'ishman? If I jes' knowed dat——"

He cast a swift glance up at the pilot house window. Barney dodged back, but he was not quite in time.

The darky saw the grin upon his comical mug and all was clear to him at once.

Instantly his manner changed.

He shook his head like a mad bull and started for the pilot house door. Barney had the wheel lashed and fled into the engine room.

The darky pursued him and overtook him here. The result was a lively rough and tumble which baffles description.

They struggled until both were so exhausted that they fell in a heap and lay gasping and panting. Then Frank came on deck and they scurried away to their duties fast enough.

Day by day the little submarine boat cut down the distance to the region of ice.

One day an ice-berg was sighted and then later land was visible.

Frank took his bearings.

"The south coast of Greenland," he declared. "We shall soon be in Davis Straits."

This was cheering news, for all were looking forward eagerly to reaching the Behring Sea. There was a long perilous submarine voyage yet to undergo.

So with anxious eyes they scanned the horizon every day.

Ice-bergs became numerous, in fact so numerous that it was risky work dodging among them. Gradually the explorers worked their way into Baffin's Bay.

Then Frank said:

"We are now opposite the mouth of Lancaster Sound. It is of course closed by ice, but we must go under that ice. We will then pass under Barrow Strait into Melville Sound. Leaving Banks Land to the south we shall be in the Arctic Ocean. Then we must proceed due west to Point Barrow and into the Behring Straits."

"Good!" cried Seth, "is there no danger of losing our course?"

"Not the slightest!"

Frank took his bearings carefully. Then he ordered all into the cabin and hermetically closing the doors, cried.

"Now bid good-bye to daylight for some weeks!"

Then—down went the Sea Crab.

The Arctic seas are not deep in any part, so that it was not long before bottom was seen.

This was dark and muddy, and much unlike the depths of the Atlantic. There were vastly different forms of plant and fish life.

Diving seals sometimes came almost down to the deck of the Crab. Whales shot past like huge mountains and there were many kinds of narwhals and swordfish.

Now that the boat was really under the ice, the blackness of the ocean depths was intense. The search light could hardly make an impression on it.

So that progress was slow. The greatest of care was exercised.

Incidents of an interesting sort were few. The days came and went slowly.

The voyagers amused themselves as best they could in friendly games. Barney played lively airs on his fiddle, and Pomp hit up the banjo.

It was such a journey under the Arctic ice as they never forgot. Many horrible thoughts were created.

Suppose that the machinery of the boat should give out, and they should be unable to proceed further? What a horrible fate it would be!

One day a chilling incident happened. Barney was in the pilot-house.

At times, of course, the wall of ice overhead could be seen, it coming down into view. This was in shallow water.

But Barney suddenly saw the wall of ice shut down wholly in front of him, touching the very bed of the ocean.

Of course the boat could go no further. He was obliged to bring it to a halt.

Frank rushed into the pilot-house when the boat stopped.

"What is the matter, Barney?" he asked. "What has happened?"

"Shure, sor, yez kin look fer yesilf," declared the Celt.

The young inventor did look.

"Solid ice!" he muttered.

The rays of the search-light were turned upon the ice wall. The passage of the submarine boat was certainly blocked.

But Frank Reade, Jr., guessed the reason.

"We have run too near land," he said. "Keep off to the north, Barney, and see if the water does not get deeper."

It was true that the bed of the sea at this point began to slope downward. The submarine boat followed it.

Gradually a crevice appeared between the ice wall and the bed of the ocean. Frank's hypothesis was proven correct.

"It is right," declared Seth. "We must have been near land!"

In due course of time the ice roof was fathoms above, and the Sea Crab proceeded safely on her way.

But there were other times when the ice roof descended and the Crab was obliged to find her way among columns of glittering silver, and under brilliant arches.

But all things must have an end, and this story has, after all, little to do with the incidents of that voyage under the Arctic ice.

In due course of time, therefore, suffice it to say, the submarine boat emerged into the open waters below Cape Barrow.

What a relief it was to feast the gaze once more upon the sky and the surface of the sea, though it was an Arctic one.

The voyagers did not venture out on deck for the air was too piercing. But they could enjoy looking at the scene through the windows.

"We can safely say," said Frank, "that we are the only people who have ever successfully made the Northwest Passage."

"An achievement we have a right to boast of," declared Small.

"That is true."

"Bejabers, I can't say that I'd iver keer about takin' it more nor once in a loifetime," declared Barney.

All laughed at this.

"You are right, Barney!" cried Small; "it is by no means a pleasure trip."

Though the Arctic was practically open at this point, there were yet great fields of ice to dodge and giant bergs to avoid.

However, no accident befell the Crab, and she made good speed on an average until well down toward Behring Straits.

There land was sighted.

This was, of course, Alaska, and the next day Frank sighted Cape Prince of Wales.

They were rapidly nearing their destination, and thus far the trip had been a glorious success. On this point they could congratulate themselves.

But just below Cape Prince of Wales for the first time a sail was sighted.

At the distance it looked like some sort of a sealing vessel or, per-

haps, a whaler. It seemed chiefly remarkable as being the first sail sighted since leaving the Atlantic.

So little heed was paid to it, until Barney suddenly noticed that it was drawing nearer.

This was something of a surprise.

"Misther Frank!" called the Celt.

"Well!" exclaimed Frank.

"Do yez moind the sail, sor?"

"What of it?"

"Shure, it's chasin' us, sor!"

Frank gave a look at the distant vessel and saw that this was true. She had crowded on canvas and was rapidly bearing down upon the Crab. What did this mean?

Frank was puzzled. He could hardly believe that idle curiosity would prompt them to do this.

He went into the cabin and got his most powerful glass. With this he studied the strange vessel.

And the more he did this, the more its actions struck him as decidedly queer.

It would have been an easy matter to have given the submarine boat its head and run away from the pursuer; but Frank could see no reason for doing this.

So he kept the Crab along at a moderate pace, and allowed the stranger to overhaul him.

Every moment the unknown loomed up nearer, and now it was seen that she was a schooner of the fastest sailing type.

But not a man could be seen at her rail, though two were descried in the crosstrees.

When not two miles distant she suddenly ran up a signal streamer.

Frank read by it that she desired to speak the Crab, so he ordered Barney to answer it in acquiescence. Then the Crab came about and slackened speed.

Nearer drew the schooner.

The wind was fresh, and it did not take long to draw the two vessels together. Then the hail came.

"Torpedo boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy the schooner!" replied Frank. "This is no torpedo boat!"

"What the deuce are you?" came back the hail.

"This is the submarine boat, Crab, from Readestown, U. S. A. Captain Frank Reade, Jr."

"Submarine boat?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to say that you sail under water?"

"Yes."

A loud laugh came back from the schooner's deck and a familiar figure appeared at the rail, while a voice which Frank had heard before, came across the water:

"I am glad to know that you have come safely through the Northwest passage. You would not let me take passage on board your boat but I found other conveyance, and with your permission will help you explore the Unknown Sea in the interests of the Newsgatherer."

Seth Small gasped in sheer amazement, and Frank was stricken dumb with the force of the thing, for the speaker was no other than the daring reporter, Hustler Jenks.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION.

FRANK was simply astonished, but Small was as mad as a hatter.

"The impudent scamp," he exclaimed, hotly. "The audacity of such a game! He ought to be caned for meddling!"

Then he shouted:

"How the devil did you get here, Hustler Jenks?"

The Hustler laughed, and replied suavely:

"Well, I went to San Francisco and chartered this schooner, the Mollie, Captain Snuff. We have been waiting here two weeks for you to come through the straits."

"Do you realize the impudence of this thing?"

"Impudence?"

"Yes, sir; sheer, deliberate impudence! It is nothing short of that, sir! You have no right to track us this way, like the Paul Pry that you are!"

"Easy, Seth," replied the Hustler, nonchalantly. "Business is business, and you would not fail to do the same thing yourself."

"But there is honor in even the sharpest game!"

"I see nothing dishonorable in my course. I could not secure passage on your vessel so I found other conveyance. Come, Seth, let's fraternize."

"Do you intend to follow us?"

"Of course!"

"Well, you are committing yourself to a vile subterfuge and it will never succeed. When we start the Crab you can never keep in sight of us."

"Suppose we sail along together, then?" suggested the irrepressible Hustler."

Seth was dumfounded.

"Well," he finally muttered. "Did you ever hear the likes of that. The sheer gall of the fellow!"

"He certainly is a shrewd one," agreed Frank; "he seems in earnest."

"What shall I tell him?"

"That we cannot possibly allow him to accompany us."

"Good!"

Small communicated this decision to his confrere. But it seemed to have little effect upon him. He only laughed good naturedly.

Seth, in sheer desperation, cried:

"Did you ever see the beat of it? Now he will go home and claim the credit of this whole enterprise. He will exclude everything that does not pertain to himself. Such men are a blight upon the profession!"

In spite of the apparent dishonesty of the thing, Frank could not but admire the fellow's audacity and enterprise.

There was no denying the fact that he was enterprising and a worthy representative of the smart reporter.

But Frank knew that he and Small would never affiliate in the world. So he could not offer to take him along.

Consequently he turned and said to Barney:

"Put on speed once more. Steer south by west."

"All right, sor."

The Celt sprung away to obey the order. In a few seconds the submarine boat was gliding away upon her course. The schooner followed.

The Mollie had every stitch of canvas set, and she was before the wind. For a time she gave the Crab quite a race.

But the electric boat finally drew slowly away, and it became evident that the schooner would be rapidly outstripped.

Soon she began to drop rapidly behind as the wind died out. And in due course she was hull down on the horizon.

Darkness came on, and then she was lost sight of altogether.

"We shall see no more of her," said Frank, "so give yourself no further apprehension, Small. After all, that fellow was only doing what he considered his duty."

"That may be," agreed the reporter ruefully; "but that don't help me. "You do not understand newspaper competition."

That night the Crab sailed on by the glare of the search-light. Barney and Pomp served alternate turns at the wheel.

Small was astir at an early hour and received something of a surprise. Land to the westward was in sight.

"That is the promontory which forms the northern limit of the Gulf of Anadir," declared Frank, who was already on deck.

"What?" exclaimed Seth, joyfully, "then we are rapidly drawing nearer to our destination?"

"Yes!"

"Are you sure we have the exact location on the chart? You know all reckonings vary!"

"We will search until we find it," said Frank. "We ought to be across the mouth of this gulf by to-morrow night. By the next morning we should be in sight of the arched entrance to the Unknown Sea!"

"I hope me may!"

Then a sudden idea occurred to Seth.

"But the schooner—of course, we slipped her in the night."

"I have seen nothing of her," said Frank.

Instinctively both turned a gaze to the northward. The result was thrilling and caused them to start.

For there, plainly visible above the horizon, was a sail.

They exchanged glances.

Could it be that the schooner had crept up on them in the night while the boat was running under reduced speed?

Frank remembered that the wind had freshened almost to a gale about midnight. This told the tale.

"Well, I'm blowed!" declared Small, "that fellow has not only perseverance, but he has luck!"

"I agree with you," said Frank, "but I think we can shake him off to-day."

Two hours later the schooner was again out of sight and was not seen again that day.

At nightfall the Crab was sailing along within view of high cliffs and a sharp lookout for reefs was necessary.

They were in the vicinity of the cliff arch described by Brant so that it was necessary to proceed with more caution. But to pursue the search after dark was out of the question.

So the submarine boat hove to and dropped anchor to wait for morning to come. They were but a few miles off shore.

"Wouldn't it be a joke," laughed Frank, "if that schooner should crawl upon us again to-night?"

Small's face clouded.

"That would not do!" he declared.

There was little sleep for any on board that night. A high wind arose and it required supreme efforts to keep the Crab to her anchorage.

Frank at one time thought of sinking her, but he did not do so. It seemed a long time ere daylight broke.

Then the first thing spied far out to sea was a white sail. That it was the Mollie there was no doubt.

Small gritted his teeth and muttered:

"Confound his insolence!"

Frank laughed quietly and started the boat along the shore. It was necessary to keep a sharp lookout for reefs.

In a few hours the sail disappeared and was not again seen. It was about the hour of two, when suddenly Frank shouted to Barney:

"Hard aport, Barney! Slacken speed!"

"All roight, sor!"

The Sea Crab came about quickly. Then Frank gripped Seth's arm.

"Look!" he said.

The scribe did look with all his eyes. There, plainly visible, was the cliff arch.

Slowly the Crab wended its way among the reefs.

"There is one thing, Small," said Frank; "you need hardly fear that the schooner will ever be able to make her way through these reefs."

"Good!" exclaimed Small. "I do not like to be understood as selfish, but the audacity and covetousness of that fellow needs punishment!"

Nearer drew the Crab to the cliff arch. Then for the first time they saw beyond it the waters of the inland unknown sea.

"Brant's yarn is proved true," declared the reporter. "Surely the commerce of centuries might pass along this coast without one captain ever spying the cliff arch. It can only be seen at short angle, and it is seldom that a passing ship would venture near enough to that angle."

"Which is correct," agreed Frank. "Well, we are at least the second party to feast our gaze upon the waters of the unknown sea!"

"You are right!"

The Sea Crab sailed leisurely through the cavern entrance and in a few moments emerged into the inland sea.

It presented the appearance exactly as described by Captain Brant. The shores extended north and south far out of sight.

Seth Small was delighted.

He had already made copious notes. Frank approached him.

"What is your desire!" he asked. "Shall we proceed straight to the island?"

"First let us take a look at these shores," said the reporter, "don't you think that advisable?"

"Very well," agreed Frank. "We will do so."

So the course of the Sea Crab was changed and she stood southward along the shore of the unknown sea.

It was a bleak and barren coast. There seemed nothing in its contour that was especially inviting or interesting even.

There was no sign of human habitation and little indication of the presence of game, beyond the huge flocks of ducks and wild geese, which harbored in the little inlets.

So after fifty or sixty miles of this, Seth tired of it and the course was changed.

Due northwest the course was made in the hopes of striking the island described by Brant.

The waters of the Unknown Sea seemed to differ greatly from those of the open sea.

They were more limpid and blue, doubtless owing to the fact that they were not so salt. The Crab cut its way through them at great speed.

But much time had been consumed in traveling along the coast, and darkness coming on, it was decided to lay to for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OCTOPUS.

THE voyagers sought their couches that night, filled with exciting forebodings of the morrow.

For by that time they should be able to make the haunted isle, as Brant had described it.

"What do you think became of the schooner?" asked Frank, with a laugh.

Small indulged in a grimace.

"I hope he will have the good sense to return to San Francisco," he said; "that is what he ought to do."

"I'll wager he will not."

"Very likely!"

"I'll wager again that he'll find his way into this sea, and that we shall yet run across him here!"

Small plainly was made uncomfortable by this. He muttered something under his breath, and then changed the subject.

The next morning the Sea Crab resumed her course. But she had not gone far, when an astounding thing happened.

Suddenly a furious commotion took place in the water about the Crab. Something underneath its keel raised it forcibly up, and the shock threw the voyagers off their feet.

"What's the matter, Barney?" shouted Frank. "Have we struck a reef?"

"Divil a bit, sor!" replied the Celt.

"What's the matter, then?"

"Och, I don't know, sor!"

Frank rushed on deck. A glance was enough.

He saw great slimy arms or tentacles which had shot up out of the water and enfolded themselves about the bow and stern of the boat.

A tremendous power was pulling the boat beneath the surface.

"Quick!" shouted Frank, springing into the cabin. "Press lever No. 6!"

"All roight, sor!"

Barney pressed the lever, and the doors and windows were shut just in time.

Then the Crab went down.

Small rushed out of his stateroom.

"What is the matter?" he cried.

"We are attacked by a giant octopus," cried Frank; "it is dragging us to the bottom! We have got to give him a fight."

"A giant octopus?"

"Yes!"

"Jove, he must be a giant to pull our boat down like this."

"Well, you'll find he is. Fill the tank, Barney. Let him have his own way!"

Barney had also turned on the electric lights so that objects could be discerned in the sea about. The water was not of great depth.

There was a vision through the pilot house window of fearful catlike eyes and an enormous beak.

The boat rocked and swayed with the exertion of the monster to crush it. The forward guard rails had been bent like wire, and the creature's beak was beating against the hull with a force which was by no means slight.

Down to the bottom it dragged its prey, and here it was held. Something must be done at once.

Frank knew this and acted accordingly. It did not take him long to decide how to cope with the monster.

He went into the after cabin and brought out a diving suit.

It was his own invention and required no life line or air pump. On the back the diver wore a tank containing chemicals, such as furnished air aboard the submarine boat.

He donned the suit and took a coil of wire in his hands.

Directions were given to Barney, and then Frank entered the vestibule and flooded it with water.

A moment later he was on deck. Then he was exposed to most deadly peril.

As good fortune had it he was on the opposite side of the cabin from the octopus and out of the range of the creature's eyes.

But yet there was much danger of getting a blow from the powerful tentacles, which were thrashing so wildly about. So he exercised the utmost caution.

He crept along toward the stern, carrying one end of the wire. Here one of the creature's tentacles was wound about the hull.

Frank deftly fastened the wire to the steel railing near the tentacle. Then he crept quickly back to the cabin window and signaled to Barney.

Now the Celt had been instructed to connect the wire with the powerful dynamos, using a shut-off in the pilot-house.

When Frank gave the signal, the Celt understood and answered it. The result was terrific.

Through the wire the full force of the electric current went bounding. The rail carried it to the tentacle, and the mighty octopus gave a terrific heave and plunge.

It struggled furiously, but the terrific current surging through its system was bound to conquer, and conquer it did.

The huge tentacles relaxed their awful grip and slid aside. The great jelly-like body sank back and laid helpless in the sands.

The submarine boat was saved.

To be sure it had not utterly escaped injury, yet it was a merciful deliverance from a dangerous foe. Frank flashed the search-light upon the sea monster.

"That is the largest specimen I ever saw," he declared; "he is certainly a monster."

"You're right," agreed Seth. "I have read the story of the merchant brig which was pulled down by an octopus, and always discredited it. But I am convinced now."

Frank lost no time now in sending the submarine boat to the surface again.

The incident was over and it had been a close call. But the future held others.

The Crab now set forth at full speed to find the Haunted Isle. This had been described by Brant as about fifty miles from the entrance to the Unknown Sea.

In that case a few hours ought to bring it into sight. And indeed this proved the truth.

Land was sighted dead ahead, and Frank, studying it with his glass, declared it was an island.

That they had at last sighted the Haunted Isle there was no doubt.

The Crab bore down rapidly for it. Soon the high cliffs were quite plain.

Then the long promontories described by Brant were seen, and also the peculiar shape of the isle, which had led them to give it the name of the Bull's Head.

There were the two horns just as Brant had depicted. Interest was now at fever height.

The submarine boat glided in as close to shore as possible. Then anchor was dropped.

"Well!" exclaimed Frank with a deep breath. "We are here at last."

"Which is a good thing," rejoined Small. "There is nothing like success. Now to do some exploring."

The reporter could hardly wait for the small boat to be put out and take them ashore.

It was arranged that Barney should accompany Frank and Small. They were well equipped with small arms to be prepared for an attack.

There were no foes upon the isle to their knowledge, but always in entering an unknown territory it was well to go prepared for trouble.

The boat put out, and Barney quickly rowed it ashore.

They pulled it high and dry up on the beach, and then took a look about them.

Small picked up a handful of sand and examined it.

"What do you think of it, Frank?" he asked.

"I think this isle is of volcanic origin," replied the young inventor.

"The soil and character of the rocks would seem to warrant that belief."

"You are right!"

They walked along the beach for some ways, studying the cliffs and the types of vegetation which were apparent.

Then Small proposed climbing the higher ground.

"Ah, look!" he cried. "There is the Martello tower spoken of by Brant."

This was true.

There upon the highest point of land among the trees was the tower spoken of by the captain. It was an ancient looking structure.

"Be jabers an' here's the way up to it," cried Barney.

In the rocks there were cut steps which led to the heights above. Up these the explorers climbed.

Up they went, and as they rose a wider view of the sea and land was obtained.

Soon they were upon the very summit of the cliff. A path led to the spot where stood the tower.

Nor was this the only sign of former occupancy of the isle.

There were ruins of an ancient castle with a moat and the foundations of towers and battlements.

The voyagers spent much time in examining the ruins.

Then Frank declared:

"Brant was right on one point."

"Eh?" exclaimed Small.

"These buildings are of Norse character and I will wager that this was once a stronghold of that hardy race."

"It don't seem possible," said Small, incredulously. "How could they ever get over into this part of the world?"

"They were great seamen and rovers," replied Frank. "We have evidence that they visited America, and also the far shores of Hudson's Bay. They knew all the byways of the Northern Seas. They may have discovered a passage along the northern coast of Asia, which finally brought them here."

"Ye—es," partly agreed the scribe; "it is straining a little, though."

"One thing is certain."

"Well?"

"These are not the ruins of an abode of any native Kamtschatkans. They never constructed anything bigger than a mud hut or a bough shanty. That is true."

"Well," said Small, in concession, "there is no doubt but that this was a fortress built by some warlike band of people. Whether Norsemen or not, matters but little"

"Let it go at that, then," said Frank; "eh—what the deuce is that?"

The ground suddenly began to vibrate. Then a fearful, deafening, unearthly bellow, like the cries of a thousand mad bulls filled the air.

It was a terrifying sound.

CHAPTER VII.

MYSTERIES OF THE ISLAND.

THE effect of this most inexplicable demonstration of some unknown element upon the explorers was almost terrifying.

For a moment they stood undecided how to act.

"Great guns!" exclaimed the reporter; "what the deuce is that?"

"It is the cries of the Black Fiend of the isle if you believe Brant's story," said Frank.

"It is most unearthly."

"Begorra, mebbe it would be safer to go back to the boat, sor?" asked Barney.

"Nonsense!" replied Frank. "I am going to wait right here until it is all over. I want to know the meaning of it."

"That is right," declared Small; "I'm with you, Frank."

So they seated themselves upon a rock. Frank noted the time at which the roarings began.

It was about three o'clock.

It ceased but a moment at a time for the length of an hour. Then it died away in the form of a peculiar sad wail.

When the phenomenon had passed, the voyagers scrambled to their feet. Frank and Small exchanged glances.

"What do you make of it?" asked the reporter.

"Nothing as yet," replied the young inventor, "it is certainly a curious thing."

"I should say so!"

"But we will solve it."

"That will be quite a feat."

"Nevertheless, we'll do it."

"I hope so!"

There was a series of stone steps leading up into the tower. Frank climbed up these, followed by the others.

From the top of the tower a complete view of the island could be had.

It was a queer scene. For a time they gazed upon it in silence.

Then Small said:

"Do you notice anything peculiar, Frank?"

"What?"

"In the shape of the isle?"

"In what respect?"

"Well, Brant gave it the name of the Bull's Head isle. I think that it resembles nothing so much as the head of the Old Nick."

"Eh!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise. "I don't see it yet."

"Well, look. There are two horns!"

"Yes!"

"They are too near together and too straight for bull's horns. Then follow the western coast line. To be sure this eminence upon which we are with its fringe of heavy vegetation reminds one of the mane of a bull. But follow that profile. There is the long nose, sardonic mouth and peaked chin of the Old Fiend himself."

"That is true," agreed Frank, with surprise. "I must admit that the resemblance is very striking."

"Of course it is. I tell you we have reached the key to the Old Nick's dominions!"

Both laughed heartily at this announcement, but Barney's face was sober and straight.

The Celt was infinitely superstitious, and crossed himself repeatedly behind their backs.

Certainly the isle had a mystery. Superstitious sailors would no doubt have stood in dread of it.

But the mystery served only to whet the keen desire of Frank and Small to solve it. They would not have abandoned the chance for anything.

Descending from the tower, they sighted the stone basin, or depression, described by Brant.

They made their way slowly down a deep descent, until they reached the edge of this.

It was for all the world like a huge bowl scooped out of the solid rock.

There was no evidence that this had been accomplished by human hands. If the work of Nature, it was certainly marvelous.

Down to the verge of the black pool below there were steps cut in the rock.

The pool itself covered perhaps two acres of surface. Frank descended to its verge.

He looked down into the dark depths and tried to fathom its mystery.

"It is very strange," he said; "this pool served the ancient inhabitants some purpose."

"Correct," agreed Small.

"But what was it?"

"An enigma."

"They certainly cut these steps down here for a purpose."

"To get the water."

Frank knelt and tasted of the water.

It was brackish.

"No," he said, "it could never have been that. There was another purpose. The next time we come ashore I'll bring my diving suit and you can lower me down here. Perhaps I can find something under this water to explain the mystery of the isle."

The scribe looked keenly at Frank.

"You have a theory?" he said.

"Yes."

"Would you tell it?"

"Well, it may be absurd. "But I don't believe that water came there naturally."

"Eh?"

The reporter was astounded.

"I have an idea that it was brought there by artificial means. I don't know why, but there is a queer premonition tells me that at the bottom of that basin is a solution of the mystery of this isle."

"That is queer!" muttered Small. "It is the last place I should think of looking for it."

"With a diving suit I can mighty soon tell."

"Why not go back and get it now? I am eager with interest to know what is in that place."

"No!" replied Frank. "We will try it some other time."

With this they ascended from the basin. They had consumed more time than they had imagined.

The sun was already low in the western sky, so it was decided to return to the Crab.

So back to the shore they went and rowed back to the submarine boat. Here they found Pomp in a paroxysm of superstitious terror.

Like Barney, he could ascribe the strange bellowing sound which the isle gave forth to no other agency than the devil.

Frank and Small tried to reason with him.

But it was of no use.

"Fo' de lan's sake, honey, bress yo' haht, dere am no luck in dis yere island. Sho's youse bo'n it's hoodooed."

Frank and Small laughed.

"Maybe it is!" cried the reporter. "If so, I am a Jonah!"

However, Pomp recovered sufficiently to serve them up an appetizing meal, and then all turned into their hammocks for rest.

The night passed and finally daylight came again. Barney was on the last watch and he aroused everybody at an early hour.

The reason for this was that it had been decided to take an early start for the exploration of the lower end of the "Devil's Head," as Barney persisted in calling the isle.

Accordingly Pomp had an early breakfast. It was about sunrise that the trio of explorers again set foot on the isle.

They had hardly done so when the isle began to fiercely bellow again.

As before, this lasted an hour. The explorers could do naught while it continued.

But when it was over, and Barney had muttered an extra Ave, they again set forth upon the trip. Soon they had entered a tract of forest.

There were firs, spruces, birch and beech. The undergrowth was tangled and dense everywhere.

Upon the extreme end of this part of the isle there was a small harbor. Here were found the ruins of an ancient quay.

This was proof that the old time inhabitants of the isle were a seafaring people, and all this lent color to Frank's theory of the Norsemen.

All this consumed time, and it was some time after noon when they retraced their steps to the spot where they had left their boat.

Suddenly Barney paused.

"Bejabers, that's queer," he muttered.

"What?" asked Small.

"Shure, it's footprints, sor, and not wan av us made them!"

"Footprints!" ejaculated Frank; "that is queer. Is the isle inhabited after all?"

But to their sheer amazement the footprints were made by some one who wore a modern boot. That it was not one of their own marks was proved by each trying the imprint.

Astounded beyond measure, the trio looked at each other.

"Bejabers, it's quare," muttered Barney.

"It's more than queer," averred Small.

"What can it mean?"

"To whom do they belong?"

They looked up and down the beach and all around. Not a living being other than themselves was in sight.

Here was a mystery.

They certainly were not dreaming. There was no mistake.

There were the footprints beyond all peradventure. For a time they were at a loss what to do.

"It is one thing certain," declared the reporter, "we have struck upon the keenest mystery of the age."

"Well, these footprints can only prove one thing," declared Frank.

"Well?"

"That is, that there are others, or at least one other upon this isle besides ourselves."

"A castaway!"

"Perhaps so!"

"In that case we may not be the first, next to Brant, to sail these seas."

"All that is admitted. But we must track down and make the acquaintance of this unknown person. It may prove of value to us."

So at once the trail was taken. It was easy to follow the plain footprints.

Along the sandy beach they went for some ways. Then the trail quite suddenly terminated.

And there directly before them, sitting nonchalantly upon a rock and puffing a cigar, was a man of the civilized type.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMPROMISE.

It was no wild barbarian or descendant of a mediæval race of Norsemen that they rested their astonished gaze upon.

He was a nicely dressed, polite and affable gentleman. He tipped his hat most graciously.

Small reeled back with a little baffled cry.

"Hustler Jenks!" he gasped; "the devil has brought him here!"

"How d'ye do, gentlemen?" said the cool reporter, in his off-hand way. "Glad to see you. I reckoned you'd come this way."

"Great guns!" exploded Small; "how did you get here, Jenks?"

"Well, thereby hangs a tale," replied the imperturbable journalist. "We took your trail after your summary leave taking of us in the Behring Sea. We traced you all the way down the coast."

"You did not see us enter this sea?" asked Small.

"No."

"How did you find your way here then?"

"I am always pleased to yield information," said Jenks, relighting his cigar. "You forget that you gave the entire world directions how to find this place."

"I?" exclaimed Small, hotly.

"Yes, sir!"

"In what manner, sir?"

"You rendered an accurate and detailed account of Brant's trip to this part of the world in your able article in the Universe, even to describing the archway in the cliff and the approximate latitude and longitude."

Small's face flushed.

He was a trifle crestfallen.

He knew that his rival had spoken the truth. Very magnanimously, however, Jenks continued:

"Well, we searched along the coast after losing sight of you, for the entrance through the cliff.

"And we found it. We presumed that you had entered before us, and I reckoned sure upon overhauling you. We started forth to find this island. Up to this point all was well and good.

"But while we were not yet in sight of the isle our crew took a fearful fright. From the sea there came a fearful, howling, wailing sound, like the cries of a thousand demons. Captain Snuff turned pale as a ghost and put his ship about.

"I tried to reason with him and to tell him that the island was just beyond the fog bank, and the sounds probably came from some natural cause which would easily explain itself.

"But it didn't do any good. The crew mutinied and swore that the place was a haunted sea. They would not go a league further. I was for a time in despair.

"Well, when I found that they were in earnest, I called for a boat and some provisions. These were given me and I parted company with the ship and its cowardly crew. I rowed through the fog bank and came to the island, and here I am!"

As he finished this marvelous story the reporter pulled a fresh cigar from his pocket and tendered it to Small.

"Smoke, will you?"

Small ignored the weed, but his manner softened as he said:

"Well, you are a man of grit, Jenks. When you left that ship in your rowboat did you pause to think of the consequences if you did not find the island?"

"Oh, well, if we always consider consequences we'll never run across a streak of luck. And that's what I live by."

Truly Jenks was incorrigible.

"But what would you have done?" persisted Small.

"I would have rowed straight on until I should come to land."

"And not go back?"

"Back? Bill Jenks never goes back. He goes ahead. When you can't go any further ahead, then it is time to die. That's right."

Everybody laughed at this and it was plain that a better feeling was created.

"Well," said Frank, presently. "What are you going to do now—you have got here?"

"I shall explore the island, make a good thing of it, and send it by mail or wire to the 'Newsgatherer.'"

"It will take you some time to get there in a rowboat," said Small.

"All right!" agreed Jenks; "then I'll send it as soon as I can."

Frank had been doing some thinking.

Now he said:

"Really, my friend, you have done a foolish, almost insane thing, but you do not realize it."

"Eh?"

"You should have stuck by your ship. You can never hope to row back to any point where you can get safe transportation home. You will starve to death in this wild and lonely part of the world."

"Do you really think so?"

"I know it!"

"Well, then, I shall have the satisfaction of being added to the list of martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for the reading public."

"That is extremely foolish. Love of life should be paramount."

"It is with me."

"Then listen to reason."

"Very well, sir."

"You know that there is hardly one chance in a thousand of your reaching home in that rowboat."

"I accept your word, sir. But I did think that I could, else I would not have adopted the move. I must now find some other method of transportation."

"Have you wings?"

"No."

"Then how do you expect to accomplish it?"

The scribe was nonplused.

"It does look dubious," he admitted. "I'm in a tough scrape. Well, I thank you for your advice. I'll try and work my way out of it."

With this he threw away his cigar and began writing in his notebook, at the same time walking slowly away.

"Good-evening, gentlemen."

"He's dead game," muttered Small to Frank. "Confound the fellow, I like his pluck in spite of his impudence. It is too bad to leave him here to perish!"

"He certainly will," said Frank.

"Oh, that wouldn't do!"

"It rests with you," said the young inventor. "We will take him on board if you say so."

It was plain that Small was undergoing a mental struggle. But his better nature and generosity prevailed, so he said:

"Confound it all, he will, perhaps, agree not to cut in on me!"

"Why don't you collaborate?" suggested Frank.

"A division!"

"Let it be equal!"

"That is fair!"

"Certainly."

"I'll do it!" said Small, resolutely.

So he turned and called after his confrere.

"I say, Jenks?"

The scribe turned.

"Well," he asked, "what is it?"

"Come back here. I want to talk with you!"

"All right!"

Jenks retraced his steps. Small fixed a keen gaze upon him, and said:

"Look here, Hustler, you're in a bad scrape. You know that you had no business in coming here and cutting in on me."

"Perhaps so!"

"We will pass that all over. If you'll do the fair thing——"

"What is that?"

"Divide——"

"Thunder! I'll do better! You shall have the preference! I'll explain that my dispatches are received from you——"

Small grasped the other's hand, and tears stood in his eyes.

"Pardon me, Jenks, I never read you aright! I see that you are a generous fellow. I will not accept your terms. It must be an even chance, and we will collaborate!"

"Very well," agreed the Hustler, with genuine pleasure. "That makes us square then."

"Yes!"

"We collaborate!"

"Exactly!"

"Shake, old pard!"

They gripped hands and the breach was healed. From that moment they were the warmest of friends.

This pleased Frank exceedingly. The party returned to the submarine boat in the best of humor.

Now that Jenks had become one of the party, he quickly became popular, and Small was the most pleased of all to have him aboard.

The erstwhile rivals fraternized greatly. They compared notes and worked together till long past midnight.

The next morning Frank was resolved to solve the mystery of the island basin or the Devil's Hole, as it was called.

The diving suit was procured and the party set out for the shore. Pomp as usual remained behind.

Landing, the cliff was quickly climbed and soon they were once more in view of the basin.

There lay the pool, black as ink and strangely forbidding. This impelled Barney to declare:

"Shure, Misther Frank, I don't loike the idea av yez goin' down into that place at all, at all."

"Is that so, Barney?" exclaimed Frank, in surprise.

"Shure it is, sor."

"And why, may I ask?"

"Bekase, sor, I'm afraid yez will niver cum out agin. Shure, if yez think it nicessary to go down there at all, yez had betther let me go."

Frank laughed at this.

"That is very thoughtful of you, Barney," he said, "but I prefer to take the risk myself. I think it will be slight, if you only keep a firm hold on the rope."

"Begorra, we'll do that, sor!"

"You may be sure of that, Frank," declared Small.

They now descended into the basin by means of the steps. Frank stood a moment on the verge of the pool.

He tried to penetrate the black depths, but in vain. They were like a wall of ink.

"Do you believe there is anything worth discovering down there, Mr. Reade?" asked Jenks, dubiously.

"If I did not, I would not descend," replied Frank.

"What do you expect to find?"

"That I cannot specify, but I think I shall find a solution to the mystery of this isle."

Jenks gripped his hand.

"I hope you will," he said. "May God be with you in this venture and bring you safely back."

CHAPTER IX.

A FEARFUL FATE—SMALL'S DISCOVERY.

"THANK you!" replied Frank. "I anticipate little danger."

Then he put on the diving helmet and the reservoir; also the weights upon his feet.

A rope was passed under his arms; then he stood upon the verge of the pool.

"All right!" he said; "lower away!"

He swung over the edge and slid down into the water. The rope was paid out rapidly.

Soon, however, it slackened, and Small exclaimed:

"He has reached the bottom!"

"Ay!" agreed Jenks. "Now may the fates favor him!"

They sat down upon the verge of the pool and waited for a signal from the diver.

The rope moved about for a time curiously, then a strange and awful thing happened.

The water in the pool began to heave and throb furiously, and then commenced that unearthly roaring sound, which sent a chill of terror to every heart.

For a moment the party on the verge of the pool were paralyzed and literally unable to act. Barney was the first to recover.

He was sufficiently terrified with the action of the pool, but thought of Frank Reade, Jr., was paramount.

"Help!" he screamed. "Shure there's Misther Frank down there an' we must pull him up. Give hold, yez omadhouns!"

"Mercy on us, yes!" cried Small. "Catch on to the rope, Jenks."

"Pull away!"

And pull they did.

But as they did so they fell over backward in a heap. The resistance had ceased, and they hastily hauled the rope up out of the depths—but no Frank Reade, Jr., was at the end of it.

For a moment horror palled upon them. It seemed certain that the young inventor had come to harm.

"God save us!" muttered Barney, in awful horror. "Phwere is Misther Frank? Och, hone! it's the black fiend as has got him, bad cess to his loikes! Shure he's bit the rope in two wid his teeth."

Small and Jenks were pallid and trembling. They regarded the broken rope blankly.

"Something sharp cut that rope," declared Small. "My soul! we must leave no stone unturned to rescue him!"

"Throw the rope down again!" cried Jenks; "perhaps he may find it and come up by it."

"Shure it's no use!" wailed Barney. "The black divil has him, an' it's all over wid Misther Frank!"

"Shut up your mouth!" cried Small angrily. "Throw the rope over, Jenks."

The latter obeyed, but the water in the basin boiled so that it would not sink. The roaring, bellowing sound was deafening.

In horror and despair the three men tried to study the situation. The more they did so the more assured they became that Frank's fate was sealed and that he was beyond rescue.

"There is no saving him!" groaned Small. "He is lost!"

"We ought to do something."

"What?"

It was plain that nothing could be done. There was a thought of returning to the Crab for a nother diving suit and someone of the party going down after Frank. But this would seem to mean only the needless sacrifice of another life.

So it was not tried.

The three desperate men hung about the pool for an hour until the boiling waters subsided. Then the rope was lowered again in the hope that it might bring the lost man to the surface.

But it did not.

Whatever had become of the young inventor there was no clew offered. Barney was in a paroxysm of grief.

Every known method was tried to solve the mystery, but in vain. Thus the day was passed.

Slowly and sadly the three men left the basin as darkness came on. It seemed hard to leave Frank to such an unknown fate.

But it seemed of no use to look further for him. Nor did it seem possible.

However, on the way back to the shore, an idea occurred to Small.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "do you know what I think?"

"What?" asked Jenks.

"I believe the secret of the isle exists, just as Frank said, in the basin."

"Well, it looks to me as if it must continue to stay there."

"Not much. We will try and solve it."

Jenks looked at his confrere.

"Mercy on us!" he exclaimed. "You haven't got it, have you?"

"What?"

"The crank idea which sent Frank to his death."

Small snapped his fingers.

"Don't be incredulous," he said. "When we get aboard the boat I will outline my plan to you!"

"I am glad that you have one!"

Barney was yet wailing dismally over the fate of his young master. As he went aboard he communicated the awful news to Pomp.

The darky went into a fit and could with difficulty be dissuaded from throwing himself overboard. These two faithful servitors were much devoted to Frank Reade, Jr.

But Small and Jenks finally succeeded in calming them in a measure. Then Small elaborated his ideas.

"It is my theory," he said, "that this island is hollow."

"Hollow?" exclaimed Jenks.

"Yes!"

"What are your reasons for thinking that, may I ask?"

"Well, it is just now based upon fancy, I will admit. But allow that the island is hollow, that it is honeycombed with natural passages and coves, many of these below the sea line."

Jenks was interested.

"Go on!" he said.

"In that case it would not be difficult to explain the phenomena of the isle at all. The boiling of the water in the basin and the bellowing sound, could all be caused by the rush of the tide at periodic intervals through some internal passage."

For a moment Jenks and Barney and Pomp were silent. But as the true force of Small's logical hypothesis began to dawn upon them they became intensely excited.

"By the gods of India," ejaculated Jenks, "you have guessed the whole thing, old boy. You are a dandy! Of course, that explains it!"

Barney's eyes glistened.

"Shure, an' p'raps Misther Frank is somewhere in some av thim passages now," he cried.

"Just so," agreed Small. "We will not give him up yet."

"Golly! I jes' hopes, sah, yo' fin' Marse Frank!" cried Pomp.

"We will do so if such a thing is possible," declared Seth.

"What move can we make?" asked Jenks.

"Ah, that is it! If it is the truth, then I imagine there is some way of entering the passages from the open sea. We can quickly learn by exploring the bed of the sea hereabouts."

"Shall we try it now?" asked Jenks.

"Yez kin bet we will!" cried Barney, starting for the pilot-house. "If we kin foind Misther Frank, the sooner we do it the betther!"

"But had we better not wait until morning?" asked Jenks.

"Why?" asked Small.

"The darkness——"

"You forget. It is always dark under water. We have an electric search light to obviate that."

"Certainly," agreed Jenks. "I did not think of that."

Barney had closed the boat up and now proceeded to sink her. Down she went in one hundred fathoms of water.

The search light went flashing about through the coral reefs. It was a remarkable spectacle.

There were scores of these ledges extending in all directions. The adventurers began now to realize the magnitude of the task before them.

If there was a series of passages under the island, if it was indeed honeycombed as Small's theory had it, where was the entrance?

It would seem like looking for a needle in a haystack to find it.

But there was no other way but to look for it. So the Crab began to thread its way among the reefs.

Hours were spent in this manner, and still the entrance seemed as far away as ever. What was to be done? Nothing but to keep up the quest.

For Small was positive that the pool and its basin were connected with the sea by some sort of a passage. Whether this was large enough to admit the submarine boat or not he could only guess.

It was slow and wearisome work, but an incident finally settled the difficulty. The tide, meanwhile, had begun to run out, and a distant dull, roaring sound was heard.

This was the guide which now led them to the entrance of the island cavern.

The Crab pushed its way through a forest of seaweeds and shot into a high-roofed cavern.

The water was rushing out of it with a strong current, but the boat stemmed it all right and rapidly made its way through the passage.

This led into a terrific, high-roofed chamber, which covered acres in its extent. Its roof was seen to be above the water line.

This made a small underground sea, and Small let the boat go to the surface.

The search-light flashed in all directions. It showed a mighty high arched cavern chamber. There were huge pillars and mighty nave. It was an impressive sight.

But far at one end the explorers saw that for which they were looking.

This was an orifice, circular and smoothly worn and fully large enough to admit the passage of a man's body. Toward this the submarine boat made its way.

As it approached a current of water was seen rushing through it. In its center was a slender pillar.

"There is the cause of the land bellowing which we have heard on the isle," declared Small, confidently. "Beyond that orifice there is some sort of a basin, which fills with water when the tide comes in. The pressure of the escaping air and water when the tide goes out against the roof give the strange sounds."

Jenks nodded his head.

CHAPTER X.

UNDERWATER DISCOVERIES.

"I BELIEVE you have hit it, Seth," he declared; "it is a logical explanation of the phenomenon. But——"

"What?"

"Is that basin beyond the orifice the pool?"

"I believe so."

"In that case we ought to find some trace of Frank Reade, Jr., pretty quick."

"We will try."

The submarine boat approached nearer to the orifice. The search-light was turned upon it full glare.

And this now revealed a startling discovery.

There were marks of masonry in the construction of the orifice. It looked like the work of human hands.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jenks, "human hands never made that!"

Seth stared at it.

"I believe you are right," he muttered; "that is certainly masonry."

"Nature could not do that."

"No!"

"That proves——"

"Nothing as yet," replied Seth. "I must have a closer look at it."

The boat drew nearer to the orifice. There was no mistaking the fact. It was really masonry.

To say that the submarine voyagers were excited would be a mild statement.

"By jingo!" exclaimed Small, "at some time or other this cavern was free of water."

"That is the whole story!" cried Jenks. "Why not picture the former inhabitants of this isle domiciled in these cavern chambers when the sea burst in and drowned them?"

"That is not illogical."

"But what a tragedy!"

"Awful!"

"What shall we do about it?"

"Put on diving suits and explore the region beyond that passage."

For a moment the two men were silent. The position was a forceful one.

Then Small said:

"You will allow me the privilege, Jenks. I ask it as a favor."

"All right," replied the Hustler, "but if you do not return——"

"Well?"

"I shall go after you."

"I shall use all caution and return as quickly as possible."

"Good!"

The submarine boat drifted close to the mouth of the orifice, in which the water was lowering rapidly. Small donned the diving suit and went out on deck.

The water in the orifice was not up to his armpits, and he waded along with the greatest of ease.

It was a matter of fifty yards through the structure; then he emerged into a curious dome-roofed chamber.

Just overhead he saw a glimmer of light. It came through the crevice, and was a gleam of the day which had just dawned above.

Curiously, Small looked about the chamber. The water anywhere was not above his armpits.

He crossed it and found an opening, the top of which was nearby on a level with the water line. He stooped down and went under this.

It was a narrow place, and he found himself against a stone wall. Reaching up, he felt the top of it above. Small was not the one to hesitate.

He drew himself up and dropped over on the other side. There was a slight crevice under a brow of rock. He looked out over the surface of the water and saw the outer world.

He saw circular walls of stone with steps cut in them.

"The island basin!" he gasped.

This was true.

He had actually penetrated to the basin. The commotion in its waters was easily explained by the waters rushing over the barrier of stone and out again.

The more Small studied the construction of these passages, the better satisfied he was that they had never been originally filled with water.

The ancient inhabitants had used these vaults for some purpose not just obvious as yet.

The reporter, however, did not, in these observations, forget the prime object of his visit.

This was, of course, to find Frank Reade, Jr. Thus far he had seen no trace of him.

He went carefully and thoroughly over the basin floor, under water. Every nook and corner and passage was explored.

But not a trace of him was to be found.

What did it mean?

If Frank had been stricken down in any manner and died what had become of his body? A startling explanation occurred to Small.

With the outgoing of the waters it had doubtless been carried out to sea. In that case—he thought of sharks and shuddered.

He could stay no longer in the place. He quickly retraced his way to the deck of the Crab.

Small was thoroughly satisfied that this was an accurate explanation of Frank Reade, Jr.'s fate. He was received eagerly by the others.

But when he had told his convictions there was a depression of spirits which it is hard to describe. Barney and Pomp were inconsolable.

But after awhile, practical matters asserted themselves, and it was decided to return to the open sea. They had done all that was possible.

Barney and Pomp would navigate the Crab back to San Francisco, and wire Frank's people in Readestown. It was a sad outcome of the trip.

So the Crab threaded its way out of the labyrinth and into the open sea once again.

The sun was high when the submarine boat shot above the surface. The island looked enchanting in the morning light.

The voyagers regarded it sadly, for they had seen Frank Reade, Jr., come to an untimely end. It could hold no charms for them.

They might have sailed away from the isle then, but that Barney remembered having left his knapsack, with his favorite dudeen in it, by the edge of the pool.

"Be me sowl I niver kin lave that," he cried. "Shure, it was a prisint from me own fayther, an' it has been in the O'Shea family since the days av William the Conqueror. Shure, I kin niver lave that behindt."

"Go back and get it, then," said Small. "You are not afraid to go alone?"

Barney winced and then looked at Pomp.

The latter took the tip.

"Golly, Marse Small," he cried; "wha' am de mattah wif dis chile goin' along wif de I'ishman. Sho' I ain' stretched mah legs on de land fo' a long time."

"That is all right," agreed the reporter. "Go ahead!"

With this the small boat was got out and Barney and Pomp rowed ashore. Then Small and Jenks ensconced themselves in the bow to enjoy a smoke and wait for the return of the two jokers.

It was quite a treat for them to get ashore in this manner. They tumbled out of the boat, and but for the depression regarding Frank's fate, they would have fallen to skylarking at once.

But as it was they made their way slowly up the cliff until they had reached the summit and the highest point on the Bull's Head.

"Now yez remimber, naygur," declared Barney, "phwat I was tellin' yez about the great loikness of this island ter the head av the divil."

"Yas, sah," replied Pomp.

"Well thin, cast yer eye out yonder an' yez kin see his horns."

"Golly, dat am right!" exclaimed the astonished darky; "it am berry much de same, sah."

"So it is, naygur. Now yez kin see fer yersilf."

"A'right, I'ish. Now whar am dat deep hole in de rock, sah whar Marse Frank done go down an' nebber come up no mo'?"

"Jist yez folly me."

Barney led the way down the steep path until the sink or basin was in view.

There lay the pool of water as placid as could be. Down the steps the two jokers went.

And there upon the rock where he had left it, Barney found his knapsack intact. But close beside it lay another object.

At sight of this Barney paused, and his eyes seemed likely to bulge from his head.

"Mither av Moses!" he gasped; "phwere did iver that cum from?"

It was a diving helmet and the chemical reservoir. The last time Barney had seen this it had been on Frank Reade, Jr.'s back.

To say that he was amazed would be a mild statement. For full a minute he could not speak.

"Wha' am de mattah wif yo', chile?" finally asked Pomp.

"Begorra, there's enuff," finally blurted forth Barney; 'do yez see that thing there?"

"It am a divin' helmet."

"Yis, an' be hivens it's the wan that Misther Frank wore whin he wint under the wather."

The two jokers looked at each other blankly. They were not dreaming, but were surely wide awake.

Yet what mystery was this? If Frank had been carried out to sea and eaten by sharks, how had his helmet returned to the spot?

Here was a conundrum.

Barney finally plucked up enough courage to reach down and pick it up.

Yes, there was no doubt about it; it was the very helmet worn by Frank.

Never in his life had the Celt received so forcible a shock. His knees began to tremble.

His face turned white and his eyes rolled. He picked up his knapsack and said:

"Bejabers, naygur, the divil owns this place! We'd betther go back to the boat at wanst!"

"I'se wif yo', honey!"

The two jokers started up the steps, but a cheery voice caused them to nearly fall in a heap.

"Well, Barney and Pomp, I'm glad enough to see you! Where are the other men?"

Barney gasped and Pomp moaned. They gave one look upward, and then sank trembling down.

"Ghosts!" muttered Pomp.

There before them stood Frank Reade, Jr., back from the dead!

CHAPTER XI.

FRANK'S STORY.

It was by no means a ghost which stood before Pomp and Barney but the young inventor himself.

How he came there, and why he had not turned up before we shall presently explain.

Frank regarded the two jokers in sheer amazement.

"What tomfoolery is this?" he cried. "Get up on your feet."

"Fo' de Lor', go way an' leave us, Marse Ghostis!" wailed Pomp.

"Be me sowl, we're possessed av the devil," groaned Barney.

Frank was angry.

He gave Barney a liberal kick.

"Get up you scamp!" he cried. "What nonsense is this?"

Barney stole a glance upward. A suspicion of the mistake crossed his mind. It was a little too stout a kick for a shadowy ghost.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" he muttered, "is it yesilf, Misther Frank?"

"Of course it is, you idiot!"

"And ye're not dead?"

"What the deuce are you driving at? Ah, I see. You had given me up for dead."

"Yis, sor—yis, sor!" cried Barney frantically. "And it's aloive ye are! Och, naygur, it's a happy day onct more! Shure Misther Frank's come back!"

"Fo' de good Lor'! I'se a happy nigger once more!"

And the way Frank was embraced by the two faithful fellows was a caution to lovers. But presently all calmed down, and then Frank said:

"Where are the others?"

"On bo'd the Crab, sah," replied Pomp.

"And you all gave me up for dead?"

"Yis, sor!" cried Barney.

"But why didn't you wait a reasonable time for me to return?"

"Shure we wint searchin' fer yez!" cried Barney. "An' whin we didn't find yez down there, we med up our moinds that the sharks had got yez!"

With this Barney and Pomp told the story of the quest. Frank understood all now.

"On my word," he cried, "that was a close call for me! If you hed gone off and left me, my fate would have been a serious one."

Then he told the story of his own experiences.

It was a thrilling one and held Barney and Pomp spell-bound. We will give it in brief.

Upon sliding into basin in his diving suit Frank had little idea what he was likely to encounter. He kept his eyes open, however, for any possible peril.

But none seemed visible, and he proceeded to make a search of the floor of the basin. Almost at once he discovered that it was a paved floor, and by the light of the electric globe on his helmet he saw an iron ring in the stone floor.

This was enough for him.

He lifted the trap, for such it was, with an exertion of great strength, and saw stairs leading down into what depths he knew not. Here was a discovery which at once interested him.

He felt sure now of solving the mystery of the island. Somehow he had been sure from the first that it was beneath the black waters of this pool.

So he lifted the trap and looked down into the depths.

As he believed he fastened the door securely back and proceeded to descend the stone steps. Down he went until below the level of the door.

Then a slight catastrophe occurred. The door fell with terrific force. It did not strike him, but it did shut him into utter darkness, and the edge of the door cut the rope which connected him with his friends and the upper world in two.

For a moment Frank was stunned and startled.

He tried to raise the door, but he might as well have tried to raise the globe on his shoulders. It would not yield to his efforts.

He was hopelessly a prisoner. Here was truly a thrilling position. What should he do?

For a time he was in a dire quandary and a distressed state of mind. Then the terrific outrushing of the tide began.

It was indeed a curious position. The din about him was something past all description.

But finally it passed, of course, and then Frank was enabled to act and think clearly. Of course, he tried the trap once more.

When it became evident that this would not work, he did the next best thing and descended to the depths below.

Here he came upon a curious state of affairs. The foot of the stairway seemed walled up. To all appearance he was in a living tomb.

Words can hardly express the horrible chill which settled down upon him. But he was not the kind to give way to despair.

He had a knife and a short ax with him. With these he began work upon the trap.

He broke the knife into fragments, and turned the edge of his ax, and all to no purpose. The cumbersome trap would not yield.

Finally, in sheer desperation, Frank returned to the bottom of the staircase, and began examining the wall again. Surely there must be some passage beyond, he clearly reasoned.

So he found a crevice in the wall and inserted the blade of his ax. The result was thrilling.

A huge slab of rock swung back. Beyond was a square chamber. It might have been fifty feet square.

It was high and large, and neither was it empty. In its center was an altar of curiously carved stone. On this there rested a chest carved out of soft sandstone. It was capacious, and as Frank looked into it, he saw that it was full to the brim with shining metal.

It was a yellow metal, and at once gave him a thrill. He lifted one of the little cubes.

"Gold," he muttered; "and in ingots. Here is a large treasure!"

It might have turned the head of an ordinary man to have discovered such a treasure. But Frank Reade, Jr., was not that kind.

He filtered some of the glittering lumps through his fingers and muttered:

"Gold was doubtless their sacred metal. They placed it here and filled the cavern with water so that it might never be discovered."

It was a mighty discovery, but there was one thing dearer to Frank. This was his life.

And this was at stake.

Unless he could find his way out of this place soon he must perish most miserably. He had no hopes that his friends would ever be able to find him.

So he went back to work on the trap. Time passed—how long a time he never knew. But he was doubtless under the trap when Small paid his visit to the place.

After a time, however, perseverance won. He managed to crack the huge slab of stone and lifted one section of it. He then easily emerged from his place of imprisonment.

His first move was to kick the weights from his feet and rise like a cork to the surface.

He swam about a moment and then clambered out. His friends were visible nowhere.

Frank was not surprised at this; but he was sick and dizzy from being so long under water. He removed his diving suit, and ascending to the edge of the basin, sank down exhausted under some trees.

Here he fell asleep. How long he was in this state he was unable to determine, but when he awoke the sun was shining in his face.

He sat up and looked about him, and it was then that he heard voices which seemed not far away. He looked over the edge of the basin and saw Barney and Pomp.

The reunion was a joyful one. Barney and Pomp were beside themselves with joy.

"Shure we thought it was all up wid yez, Misther Frank!" declared the Celt, "but, bejabers, ye're wid us once agin."

"And glad I am of that, my friends," declared Frank, warmly, "but now the question is, what is to be done?"

"Shure ye'll not go away and leave all that gold down there?" asked Barney; "faith we ought to take that along fer the luck av it."

"And we will," agreed Frank, "but I must have help. We need a

couple of more diving suits. Which one of you will go back to the boat and get them and also bring one of the reporters back?"

"I'll do that, sah," replied Pomp. "An' I'll stay dar an' let dem bof come back, sah."

"Spboken loike a man," cried Barney; "shure I've ilegant respict fer yure ginerosity, naygur."

Away went Pomp to carry out this plan. Barney and Frank sat down to wait for the coming of the others.

They chatted cheerfully upon the prospects of securing the treasure and making a safe cruise home.

Thus far the voyage had proved a prodigious success. They could congratulate themselves upon this.

But the perils of the enterprise were as yet by no means over, as they were destined very quickly to learn.

Time passed slowly.

"It seems to me it is about time for them to come," declared Frank. "What can be keeping them?"

"Begorra, I think I'll be afther climbing up to the tower mesilf to see if I can see them," declared Barney.

But before the Celt could execute this move both were electrified by the sound of a terrified voice above them.

"Golly, Marse Frank, jes' yo' cum quick as eber yo' kin! Dat boat ain' nowhere in sight, an' I don' beliebe dem rascal reporters hab jes' gone off and left us behind!"

"What?" exclaimed Frank.

He and Barney stared at each other. Then both climbed out of the basin. They went, without a moment's delay, to the Martello tower.

Here a good view of the water all about the island could be had, and not a sign of the submarine boat was visible anywhere.

With a gasp of surprise and horror Frank sank down upon the coping of the tower. He was overcome.

"We are in for it now," he declared.

"Begorra, I wish I had a rope around their necks," declared Barney. "I'd moighty soon bring thim back!"

"Golly! I didn' fink dey would be so mean as to do a fing like dat," exclaimed Pomp.

"No, nor do I believe it now," declared Frank. "I tell you something has happened to the boat. Perhaps it has sunk."

Barney started up with a sharp cry.

"Begorra, Misther Frank, if that is the case, shure we kin foind out. I'll put on yure diving suit and go out there and thry to foind thim."

Frank gave a start. He saw that this was wholly practicable.

The submarine boat had been anchored not a hundred yards off shore. This would be an easy distance to travel and the problem could be solved at once. So Barney started for the shore.

CHAPTER XII.

WHICH ENDS THE TALE.

As all started down for the beach, they were imbued with the belief that Barney would find the Sea Crab.

What more logical than the reasoning that the tank lever had slipped and she had gone down, and the two reporters were not familiar enough with the machinery to raise her.

If this was true and Barney could get aboard her, he could very quickly change the situation. So they went down to the water's edge with very strong hopes.

The Celt quickly donned his diving-suit and slipped into the surf. He was quickly out of sight.

Pomp and Frank sat down upon the sands to await his return. It was a time of much suspense.

Minutes passed into the hour.

They were impatient, yet aware that progress under water is slow. Then a horrible thought came to Frank.

What if Barney should get lost among the innumerable reefs and fail to find his way back to the shore? What again, if some giant octopus or shark should pick him up?

What a horrible situation would then be theirs? Some strange sort of fate had followed them since they had come to this isle."

Was it destined to accomplish their ruin? Truly this was an isle of ill fortune.

Time passed, and two hours had gone by. Still no sign of Barney. Frank grew fidgety.

Had he possessed another diving suit he would have gone in quest of him.

But just at this critical moment the surf became agitated and a dark object arose. It was Barney's helmet.

The Celt came dripping out of the sea and crossed the sands. He quickly threw off the helmet and sank down exhausted.

As soon as he could get his breath he made reply to the queries thrust upon him in rapid order.

"Divil a sign av thim kin yez foind out there," he declared. "Shure, they've sailed away and given us the ticket av leave."

A fearful gloom fell over all. Frank paced up and down the sands. For a time he was wholly in despair.

Then a sudden thought came to him.

He recalled the fact that there was a row-boat on the isle, the one by which Hustler Jenks had come thither. It might be possible to embark in this and reach some part of the Kamtschatka coast, and trust to fortune to carry them to some seaport.

At least, it was the only outlook at present, which seemed to present any possible chance for escape. And quite naturally Frank embraced it.

He announced this plan to Barney and Pomp, and they were at once in favor of it. It was now in order to find the boat.

As time was a most valuable quantity, they at once set out along the coast to find the craft. They were by no means sure of success.

For it was possible that the tide had dislodged and carried it out to sea. With hopeful hearts, however, they went on.

It was some miles at the other end of the isle that Jenks had landed. After climbing over rocks and traversing reaches of sand, however, they finally came upon the boat.

It lay between two huge bowlders. The three castaways carried it down to the waters' edge.

The oars were intact and there was a small sail. Getting into the boat the adventurers began to row back to the point from which they had started.

By this time the day had waned, and it was decided to wait until the next day before proceeding. As all were much exhausted camp was made on the beach, and they slept.

As there were no wild animals or human foes on the isle, it was deemed safe enough to sleep without a watch. So all turned in.

When day dawned again Frank was first astir. He felt stiff and sore from his experiences of the day before. Moreover a new problem had presented itself to him.

They had found the ship's boat, and it was stanch and seaworthy. But on the other hand, how were they to put to sea without provisions?

Could such a thing be obtained on the island? This was a serious and most puzzling question.

Barney and Pomp had brought their rifles ashore with them. But where could game be procured?

Ducks and geese and ptarmigans were plenty, and fish could be caught off the reef. Such food would support life indefinitely on the island.

But in the boat upon the open sea it would hardly keep a day. Then starvation must supervene.

It was easy to comprehend what it would mean to be at sea in an open boat without food or drink. The horror of such an experience could hardly be overestimated.

What was needed for such a voyage was imperishable goods—such as salt beef and ship's biscuits and water.

This latter, the most important of all stores could not be carried for the lack of water jars or kegs. All these obstacles confronted Frank.

And the more he considered them the better satisfied he became that it was impossible to undertake the cruise. It would be better, ay far, to remain on the isle.

He imparted this fact to Barney and Pomp. They received it silently. Frank could see that they were depressed.

But finally Pomp came to Frank's side, and said:

"We'se willin' to stay wif yo', sah, in any paht ob de worl' fo' ebber. P'raps dem reporters be sorry and come back some day, sah!"

Frank had thought of this, but he had not yet been able to reconcile himself to the belief that Small and Jenks had purposely gone and left them.

It was his firm belief that some serious accident had overtaken the boat and its two occupants. He was yet of the opinion that they were at the bottom of the sea off the island.

With this conviction he had several times thought of instituting a search himself with the diving suit, though for all that Barney's efforts might not have been at fault.

But all things have an end. They had been two days cast away when a change came.

Barney awoke one morning to behold a startling sight. In the little bay below was a vessel. There it lay at anchor, and he gasped:

"Mither av Moses! It's the Crab!"

There she lay at anchor just as if she had been there all the time. But a small boat was putting off from her for the shore.

And in it were two occupants. They were the two reporters, Small and Jenks.

For a moment Barney was so overcome that he hardly knew how to act. Then suddenly recovering himself, he let out an Indian yell which would have almost waked the dead.

In an instant Frank and Pomp were upon their feet. Then a shout came from the men in the boat.

To express the emotions of all at the glad reunion would baffle the most skillful of pens. Of course Small and Jenks had an explanation to make.

And it was a remarkable story which they told.

When Barney and Pomp had left for the island to recover the Celt's knapsack, Small had strolled into the pilot house and fell to monkeying with the keyboard. The result proved disastrous.

For in some manner the lever slipped and the boat started straight out to sea at full speed.

Now the keyboard was a Chinese puzzle to both reporters. For a moment they were dazed with the enormity of the misfortune and its possibilities.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Small, "we are in a scrape now, Jenks."

"I should say so!"

"What shall we do?"

"There is only one thing we can do. I've got to solve this riddle and stop the boat. If I don't we will run straight into Kamtschatka."

So Small went to work and Jenks assisted him. At length in some manner they stopped the machinery.

But they were now in just as great a quandary. They could not navigate the boat, and were far out of sight of the island. Nor did they know how to locate it.

The Sea Crab fortunately was rigged for a small sail, and this they proceeded to spread. Jenks could sail a boat, and thus rigged they set forth to find the isle.

The days of drifting and lazy sailing in the idle wind were days of suspense and forebodings to them.

It was a happy day indeed when one morning the island was under their lee, and they were enabled to make the anchorage from which they had started so suddenly a few days before.

Their surprise and delight at being united again with Frank Reade, Jr., can hardly be expressed.

They listened to his story with interest and wonderment.

"Well," cried Jenks, "if there is gold hid away down there in that basin, I say let's resurrect it!"

"Amen!" cried Small.

And so it was decided.

Frank quickly laid plans for the recovery of the treasure. This time Pomp was left aboard the Sea Crab.

The gold seekers were quickly on shore and had reached the basin. Frank and Barney donned diving-suits and descended into the underground vault.

It was an arduous task bringing up the gold from its depths. But the adventurers persevered and soon had accomplished the feat.

There it was a shining heap of yellow ingots. It was a fortune for all of them.

The next thing in order was to remove it to the submarine boat. This was done, and it was safely stowed aboard.

It was with feelings of the most profound satisfaction that the little party of explorers finally bade adieu to the Bull's Head Isle.

They climbed the Martello tower for the last time, and took a look from its summit. Then they descended to the boat on the beach below and put off from the isle.

No time was lost in getting ready to leave the Bull's Head. The Sea Crab started eastward at a lively rate of speed. Soon the isle was but a dot on the horizon.

"Well," said Seth Small, drawing a sigh of relief, "shall we compare notes now, friend Jonks?"

"I am ready!"

"I suppose that story will appear simultaneously in the Newsgatherer and the Universe?" laughed Frank.

"Exactly!" replied Jenks. "I am not going to take any advantage of my friend."

Some hours later they passed under the cliff arch and emerged into the North Pacific. Straight out to sea Frank headed, and then set his course due south.

He had come hither under Arctic ice. He would return by the way of Cape Horn.

"It will wear the Crab's engines out," he said, "but I can easily replace them. I don't care about taking that trip back under the ice."

"Right, Frank," cried Seth; "only put us off at 'Frisco. We must get our dispatches through."

"All right," agreed Frank.

So the Sea Crab put in at the Golden Gate. But there it was found that the submarine boat would never stand the trip around the Horn.

The next best thing was done; she was taken apart and shipped back to Readestown in sections. Frank Reade, Jr., with Barney and Pomp also returned thither, and Frank began work on a new invention.

It was a marvelous "story" which the two reporters made out of the trip. But that was not all.

A friendship was germinated which was destined to last through life, for with their share of the golden treasure they founded a journal of their own under the name of Small, Jenks & Co., and are running it upon up-to-date ideas.

[THE END.]

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